

Class No. 720.....

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PERSONS AND PERSONALITIES

SKETCHES

BY
K. CHANDRASEKHARAN

WITH A FOREWORD

BY
Dr. Sir S. RADHAKRISHNAN, *Kt.*



1932*

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TO
THE MEMORY OF
MY DEAR SISTER
SRIMATI K. SUBBALAKSHMI
WHOSE INSPIRING PRESENCE AND INTELLECTUAL
STIMULUS ARE NOW DENIED ME BY THE
CRUEL HAND OF UNTIMELY DEATH.

FOREWORD

MR. K. CHANDRASEKHARAN has asked me to write a brief Foreword to his short sketches of some well-known figures of Madras and I do so with pleasure. I have no pretensions to be a critic of an academic type since my knowledge of the rules and science of criticism is very limited. I like what I like and dislike what I dislike and I do not always know why. These sketches attract me for several reasons. They are written in simple and elegant prose and with a justness of appreciation and real understanding. It is not easy to give portraits of living people. If we like them, we tend to flatter them beyond measure ; if we dislike them, we are tempted to flay them alive. It is easy to be freely, adulatory or devastatingly cruel. It is hard to be sympathetic as well as just. In this difficult task, the writer, I believe, has succeeded.

On account of the young writer's limited knowledge and experience, his subjects are mostly taken from the group of Mylapore lawyers of the liberal school of Indian Politics. Their strength as well as their weakness is an exaggerated sense of balance and proportion, hardly consistent with

great faith in or even enthusiasm for radical changes. It is a law of life that our desires can be accomplished only by fighting and making sacrifices for them. It is good for our politicians to know how others see them. If these sketches induce a mood of self-inquiry, they are not written in vain.

Mr. K. Ram Mohan Sastri's drawings add considerably to the value of an interesting book.

WALTAIR, }
18th September, 1932. }

S. RADHAKRISHNAN.

PREFACE

To write about living persons, has often a distinct disadvantage. Criticism, however gentle, wounds fine susceptibilities. But every one of us is a critic. Only the sketch-writer expresses himself in print. So, when we are displeased, as we all are, we should be good enough to concede that the writer's desire to praise and criticise is as much his privilege as our own, the difference only being that he exposes himself to the public gaze, while we are safe in comparative seclusion.

It is with this comforting philosophy, I come out with my book of sketches of some important men and a few domestic characters, who have inevitably invited my pen. Among those I have chosen for portraiture, some are known to me too intimately to bear analysis. But still I feel a strange justification in my attempt.

Some of these sketches have already appeared in the *Triveni*, the *Scholar* and the *Madras Law College Magazine*. More or less they retain the same form here. Of the domestic characters, my teacher is no more, though the sketch was written when he was with me.

To my sister Srimati K. Savitri, whose un-failing love and sympathetic criticism have cheered me in my literary endeavour, I owe my present desire to publish a collection of sketches. My indebtedness is due in no small measure to Sjt. K. Ram Mohan Sastri for his enthusiastic help in illustrating the book with his living portrait-sketches in pencil.

I derive no ordinary pleasure in thanking my esteemed and sincere friend Sjt. K. Ramakotiswara Rao, the Editor of the *Triveni*, for aiding me with his valuable suggestions. It is my very proud privilege to thank Dr. Sir S. Radhakrishnan for his kind Foreword.

K. CHANDRASEKHARAN.

"THE ASHRAMA,"

MYLAPORE,

27th September, 1932.

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THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
V. S. SRINIVASA SASTRI, P.C., C.H.

It is undeniable that the words 'The Right Honourable,' added to the name of Mr. Sastri, exercise a magic influence on our imagination. They place him apart from the rest of title-winners. They seem all the more appropriate to him. For he speaks the English language with almost unsurpassed purity and polish and everything about him denotes a fastidious aloofness from the commonplace. If he talks or walks or even keeps silent, it does not fail to signify his superior claims to our attention. The more he goes to the West, the more he looks recouped.

The Indian atmosphere only pulls him down. The utter disparity between England and India, so very much emphasised in everything, in manners, in social outlook, in the standards of taste and comforts of living, oppress him. He would fain have India enjoy longer the benign influences of England to shape her into a comelier nation. For, everywhere he finds around him the forms

and ceremonies so very attractive in English society totally neglected by us. Politically, no doubt, he believes in a long connection of India with England. "I have been criticised every now and then for referring in an excess of enthusiasm to the ideals of the British Empire, but I remain imperturbable. I belong to the Servants of India Society, of which the basic article is the belief that the connection of India with England is somehow on high, intended to fulfil some high purposes," said he in 1922 in a speech delivered before an august assembly on the heights of Simla. But if to-day he has not the same enthusiasm in voicing forth similar sentiments, it is not so much the result of his weakening faith in the British connection as his growing scepticism in everything.

From a head-master to a statesman, from a pedagogue to a Privy Councillor, his transmutation is unparalleled in the annals of modern India. He was the first to champion the cause of India in the distant Dominions. He was the foremost to receive their ceremonious welcome. The freedom of cities poured on him; felicitations from Premiers engulfed him. But nothing unhinged him. Everything has been unsought for; everything felt hardly as a personal gain. His rare service is rarer still,

considering the indifferent health he has been suffering from. It is all now a glowing success. But none could have foreseen so many earthly honours crowding upon him when he joined the Servants of India Society. He himself dreamed not of so conspicuous a fame. For he started life at the Society with hardly anything more for his aim than public service in all its rigorous aspects.

If early sacrifices could have disciplined any one to a complete disregard of all outward show of pomp and power, it is the Rt. Hon. Mr. Sastri. As Agent-General in South Africa, he was only weighed down with responsibility. He was no more elated than confident in that post, though the Indian community adored him for his high integrity and thorough independence. Ever immune to the allurements of office or reward, he keeps himself free from vanities of any kind. You can scarcely find him more conscious of his effortless speaking of the English language than an Englishman of his own. Nor does he seem to mark with pain or contempt any faulty pronunciation of English by any of his countrymen. He is singularly free from a desire to mix up any expression belonging to the foreign tongue while speaking his own. He is always chaste, pellucid and pleasing.

As a Liberal he is blameless, as a Servant of India, unimpressive. And a strange curse has ever been at work in mixing his cup with a taste of bitterness. Of all the Liberals he comes in for the greatest share of public criticism, because perhaps of his standing foremost of them all to receive unique world-wide recognition. Convinced of constitutional agitation as the surest way of winning Self-Government for India, he has many a time ridiculed, in private and in public, the unwholesome method of work of the non-co-operator. He characterised it as palpably crude and ill-balanced. Nevertheless, addressing the Montreal Reform Club he exclaimed, "We in India, let me tell you once for all, are determined to be bullied no longer." So much of burning patriotism outside India looks indeed strange enough, when contrasted with the almost carping criticism he levelled against those whose genuine love of their country led them to court hardships and restrictions.

There is none more dignified in public speeches or more disappointing in private remarks. For none else could so readily throw cold water over all youthful imagination and eagerness to seek inspiration from a closer contact with men of his eminence and character. There is an inherent

disinclination in him to grow warm towards others. He is essentially uncommunicative save for a formal word of greeting or casual enquiry. Either the fear of losing his self-composure or an innate distrust of being beguiled into controversies, makes him largely a listener to what is going on around him. Occasionally he indulges in a spicy chat or breaks into an audible laugh, evincing great capacity for uncontrollable merriment, though ever vigilant not to be carried away by a self-forgetful mood. Fond of outside amusements, he has no master-bias leaning to "home-felt pleasures".

He is familiar but not kind, and though never hearty is ever courteous. With a voice not strained to a pitch he greets you cordially and stops there, leaving you to break the ice which almost freezes you into complete silence. But when he feels the company safe or the atmosphere congenial, he is not very slow to slip into the gossipy or even impart confidences.

He has known what adversity is, though he has scarcely yielded to its nipping tendencies. While comparatively unknown to the wider public as a school-master, he was respected for his rare equipment and moral calibre. Owning a fine, broad forehead, whose proportion is only enhanced by the

turban rising above it and a dignified gaze emanating from a head held high, he has never failed, despite his simple attire, to attract respectful curiosity from even strangers. Grown old and physically shattered as he is, his countenance has not ceased to make the same lofty appeal to us. Still his voice, bearing no traces of the infirmity of age or the ravages of heart disease, easily lures us away to the realm of keen exhilaration when he casts his magic spell from the platform. "After you have been feasted with wine and meat, you may not like the buttermilk of everyday", premised Mr. Satya-murthi once, speaking just after Mr. Sastri. Indeed it is rich wine, now grown richer for being old and preserved with care. The graces of language nestling round his silvery voice, he speaks filling the whole atmosphere with a musical cadence. The audience listens transported, enthralled, enraptured. There is not the same soul-force and simplicity of the Mahatma, but there is an enticing smoothness and symphony in his language. The right word to measure the true feeling and the good taste to preserve the sane outlook, place him apart from all the rest of experienced orators. The distinctness of language, the clearness of accent, the fine pose and the delightful pause, all go to heighten the

effects of his rhetoric. "Possessed of the flaming eloquence of John Bright" he is perhaps one of the best of the world's prominent speakers. Devoid of an ornate style or a declamatory tone, his language has often the gift and chiselled finish of a born artist. His speech when heard is often more lucid than when read. "Literature, after all, is memorable speech. . . It suffices something has been said which in itself or for its manner our fellows hold worthy of record, for their good," wrote Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch defining literature. Mr. Sastri's contribution to literature can always be recognised for the manner of what he has said.

Sensitive by nature, he cannot easily forget the stains caused by wounds. His memory is not the less strong for all the crowded experiences of his career. His culture and delicacy alone save him the embarrassment of depending upon others for his personal comforts. Though not very self-sufficing, he does not stint enjoying his little resources. But his probity has never so forsaken him as to make him yield to the temptations of a secure fortune even in his declining years. When a handsome purse was presented him by the South African Indian Community, he did not waver to utilise all of it for the Servants of India Society.

Schooled in the high traditions of the late Mr. Gokhale and brought up with strict standards and codes, he has resisted with courage and calmness the vicissitudes of popular opinion to which Indian politics frequently submit him.

While addressing the students of the Hindu High School on the Sixty-first Birthday of Mahatma Gandhi in 1929 he said, "He has been described as one of the world's greatest men alive. Are we not lucky to be his countrymen! How wretched we should be if we did not know of him and revere him, and, even in a remote fashion, try to be like him!" The full meaning of his words and the sincere feeling behind them could not have been adequately realised by the young minds that heard him, much less by those whose vision of Mr. Sastri had been coloured by prejudice. But if an equally fair and impartial estimate of Mr. Sastri were to be given us, how much more miserable should we feel if we did not try to cherish him and emulate his sacrifices! For no other person has so ably and with true statesmanship fought the cause of India abroad. And if to-day India has impressed herself on other nations as an entity, justified in her claims to be worthy of a place in the peace conferences of the Empire and of the

world, it is because of the forcible eloquence of Mr. Sastri which kept Premiers of Dominions, Professors of Universities and Presidents of Republics spell-bound.

SIR ALLADI KRISHNASWAMI AIYAR

I WAS wandering about the corridors of the High Court in vague discontent at the dullness that was creeping on me. I casually peeped into the Chief Justice's Court to find a large crowd, most of them young aspirants to fortune and fame, eagerly following up an argument. The late Chief Justice was stooping in his chair and biting his finger with an almost scrutinizing glance, through his thick glass, at the indignant counsel speaking at the top of his voice. I perched myself on the arm of a chair and watched the performance that was keeping the audience in such genuine appreciation of the man. My depression disappeared, for there was not the monotonous reading of evidence page after page, which I had apprehended.

It was soon clear to me why there was such a visible satisfaction on all faces. Sir Alladi Krishnaswami Aiyar was soaring in the regions of pure law. He was tracing the writ of *scire facias* to its origin and usage in the English Courts. He was clear and cogent. You could see everybody



marvelling at his complete grasp of the English law. The apprentices at Law were pressing forward to listen to him. The Chief Justice was quite uncomfortable at the prospect of his having to change his opinion. Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar on the other side was equally uneasy, though he affected to be unaffected, as he examined his shining finger nails and leaned forward and sideways in looking up rapidly the books placed before him, or smilingly receiving instructions from his junior. The speaker was vehement and at intervals, when the judges conferred with each other, was viewing the people about him with a look of complete satisfaction at his own methods. Though his voice was growing hoarse and his language impeded, he was unmindful of those obstructions. One and all in the Court-room began to feel a hidden justice in his anger and the case of his opponent weak in the face of such a long line of legal precedents.

When a junior asked him afterwards why he had made an independent investigation of the law, when the whole matter was contained in a judgment of Justice Mukherjee, he lowered his voice to a mock-serious tone and replied, "My dear fellow, the Chief Justice had made up his mind against me, and but for my seeming to labour the whole ques-

tion anew, he would have felt the matter quite simple. You see, now that he has begun appreciating me, he has asked seriously the other side to advise the client to seek a compromise." It was accompanied by a wink of his eye and a broad smile suffusing his face, and he moved on without knowing whither he should proceed.

I was reminded then by some one near me of the brilliance of Sir K. Srinivasa Aiyangar at the Bar. He knew when and how to turn the judges against his adversary and never lingered in his seat to witness the collapse himself. He was so confident of the consequences which his arguments would work on the Bench and his opponent, that he used to leave his juniors to watch the vain arguments of the other side, and hasten to the Advocates' Association to digest his victory with a pinch of snuff readily given by a good friend of his. He excelled all his compeers in the thoroughness and care with which he studied his briefs. His quick pencil did the work almost to a finish on the printed papers, even at the outset. To trip him unawares was not an easy thing. He dominated his colleagues by his masterly advocacy.

Sir A. Krishnaswami Aiyar succeeds by studying the judge. He is billing and cooing so long as the

judge is with him. But with the slightest indication of disagreement, he becomes active and bristling with citations to meet any point that may arise. He rarely allows his opponent to score an easy victory over him. His interruptions are increasing with the inclination of the judge to hear the opposing counsel calmly. He is obviously excited and audibly displeased till the fortunes change in his favour. Sometimes the tactless junior finds it unpleasant to instruct him when the judges are against him. Even the judge feels there must be something fundamentally wrong in the case of his learned friend that has caused Sir A. Krishnaswami Aiyar to get considerably upset. But he can make up for any breach of decorum on his part by a free and frank admission of his failings. He is so very communicative that the junior Bar likes him. Everybody has access to him without difficulty. Everybody finds that he likes to be admired. But he is so democratic in his habits that he easily secures the timely sympathy of his colleagues; so considerate that he must be good. He smiles at you with a knowing wink and you are caught in the snare. He knows about every one, be he the latest recruit to the profession, or the least frequenting client to his office. He is so very fond of good company.

that he is never in his element except in the midst of his acquaintances. He is loath to go on long trips, only because he feels it irksome to be restricted to the company of a few friends. He has such an avidity for spicy talk that he little knows the comforts of an interval of enforced silence.

He has all the virility of the South Indian intellect along with an inborn love of study. He pursues a miscellaneous range of serious subjects and likes to be known as the owner of a valuable library. If the lawyer's brain is generally clever, his is the deepest of the clever. His pre-occupied looks can suddenly rivet on a client however much he may be mixed up in a motley crowd. His eyes gleam at the thought that he is uproariously welcomed by the younger Bar. He is all eyes and can scarcely miss the best legal talent.

It is invariably an enlivening spectacle to watch Sir Alladi measuring swords with Mr. S. Varadachariar. Both of them are indisputable leaders. Both have come up by sheer ability. If there is not the same range of studies common between them, there is always the same quick perception. If it is engaging to find Sir A. Krishnaswami Aiyar display a strong memory and a natural flow of legal phraseology, it is equally so to witness his

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opponent splitting the atmosphere with his subtle distinctions.

Another type of success at the Bar is that of the mind which is calm and determined in face of the stoutest opposition from the Bench. We can include in that category Mr. T. Rangachariar. He is slow and steady as he proceeds with his case and allows room for any amount of interjections and interruptions and passes on with a nodding "yes," or a drawling "very well, My Lord." His fingers play with the ribbons of his gown hanging from the shoulder, and his demeanour assures everybody that there is nothing wrong anywhere within the Court-room. He does not perspire with intense disappointment or expectation. He brings down his hammer in continuous plodding regularity. A fight between him and Krishnaswami Aiyar is an inspiring lesson to the juniors. One is inevitably reminded of the exhibition of prowess between a Richard Cœur de Lion and a Saladin in the pages of Sir Walter Scott. For it is a contest between a heavy club on the one side and a flashing, lithe steel on the other. Whereas Mr. Rangachariar is all readiness to go on repeating his points even in the teeth of opposition, Sir Alladi is all agility and shrewdness from beginning to end.

It is an exhilarating scene. Sir Alladi feels still the same enthusiasm of the prize-boy at school. He must be winning. He must be at the top of the profession. He must be the acclaimed leader. Without the cold reasoning of the lawyer, he has warmth and fervour which never forsake him. The poor student touches the deeper springs of his heart and his reminiscent soul responds liberally in return. The more his failings, the greater is his humanity.

He unreservedly acknowledges with a grateful heart the benefactions done to him in early days by others. The name of Mr. P. R. Sundara Aiyar at once evokes in him a real mood. He can vividly recollect the earnest endeavours of his youthful days in the chambers of his master and his fervent hope of carrying on the traditions of that office. His rapid success has led many a broken heart to repose faith in the unknown powers that can shape a career to its ultimate height.

His is no ordinary success. His rise to leadership has been meteor-like. When his name was mentioned for the Advocate-Generalship, there was universal gratification and a feeling that it was but his due. Good fortune and fame have not changed him. He greets one and all with the usual

hail-fellow-well-met attitude, speaking with a dragging intonation peculiar to his voice and manner. Place him in any sphere beyond the reach of the ordinary, he can still be not puffed up, but strangely enough, would even grumble at such an isolated eminence. Perhaps, he is yet untutored in the ways of unbending power and unruffled dignity.

MY FAVOURITE GUEST

My favourite guest is almost the last of my father's contemporaries. He has all the virtues and defects of my ancestral house. He can get excited at the slightest provocation or melt into tears when narrating some incident connected with my father's noble life. He is simple, credulous, and emotional and is to me like our home-made butter, cheap and dear alike. His harmless pride in his sense of economy which has made him what he is to-day, is of much educative value to those who lack artlessness. The story of his early life with his pittance of a salary in the starting days of his official career, and his one rich meal of cooked rice with buttermilk, has passed to me like current coin. Though he has grown old with time, still the youngest can find in him a spirited and curiosity-awakened companion, ever ready for adventure or for argument. The tenderer the age of children, the blither his spirits when he frolics with them.

Education has only burnished the fine stuff of his character. The comforts derived for months

from a rich man's hospitality, can never disable him from pursuing the even tenor of his frugal life at home. The only luxury he has learnt to enjoy, all these years is to avail himself of his access to valuable books on a wide range of subjects. The "Encyclopædia Britannica" is the one book which can satisfy his voracious curiosity. The subject of world-geography with the details of its flora and fauna has always an overpowering attraction for him. His preference for the library with its volumes of Natural History to the monotonous lectures of the class-room in his college days, is perhaps the best comment on his self-acquisitive powers. Biography ranks next in order in his studies, and there is none dear or near to him that has not had it dinned into his or her ears by him, how an Abbot's "Life of Napoleon" contains the varied charms of history, romance, novel and biography, rolled into one. Novels in general, whether of the classical type or of the modern six-penny kind, never enthuse him. The secret of his over-fondness for character study is perhaps his own faculty to glimpse greatness in others, which too often proves itself whenever he sublimates every quality of my father into a noteworthy trait of the higher man. His impatience to

engage in a hearty conversation and his child-like delight in trying to gratify every little curiosity of his, amuse us all who have watched him in the attempt. His great enthusiasm will prevent him sometimes from a clear articulation of his words in the middle of a narration. I feel always a freshness in his candour as that of the cloudless morning.

Even while young, he did not aspire to become a graduate, as he felt the University degree too costly in view of his ultimate goal of quill-driving. From among a number of applicants for the post of a clerk, he was chosen for his intrinsic worth. He impressed the *Dorai*, who selected him, by his ready and resourceful answers. "What does the second book of Euclid treat of?" asked the officer, and the ready response of my guest was, "Secunderabad is a British Cantonment". For, in his nervousness he caught indistinctly the first part of the sentence and did not wait to consider the rest. The result was, he elicited an appreciation from the Englishman that he was 'fiery and sharp'. It assured him easily a post in those good old days. The change from irresponsible youth to the serfdom of office did not rob him of his lively spirits. No other Sub-registrar of Assurances is

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so widely read, and in retirement so profitably occupied as he is.

Though a good reader of books, he has never felt the urge within him to express his own ideas in writing. Neither has he attempted at authorship nor known any disappointment on that account. But he will always bring us the information he has collected from books with unabated enthusiasm and will not be satisfied till we also feel with him for the author. The one subject which has never allured or inspired him is Sanskrit literature, but his culture being the cream of self-experience and untaught education, easily enables him to appreciate the beauties of poetry. The emotions in general never fail to touch his heart, though the subtler shades of excellence in language and rhythm may not always captivate him. Hence his leaning for music is essentially free from a passion for it.

The high-handed discipline exerted over him in his younger days, has not shed its full influence on him. Even now he cannot desist from the quaint joy of provoking irascible natures. For his enjoyment of the situation is at its height when he is enveloped in a shower of outburst in return. I like him when he is ready to forget the severest attack on him. Retaliation is a thing not quite

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familiar to him. Gratitude he has in plenty for those who have helped him in life. It is ever as fresh as his memory. With eyes glistening he can give me anecdotes how, in the early days of his adversity, a kind and affluent cousin treated him almost like a brother, and how another dear soul brought him, while he was being tossed about from place to place as a Sub-registrar of Assurances, every item of news about Madras. His attachment for Madras was his attachment for my father. He adored him as only a Boswell could; and wherever he went, he carried a lengthening chain.

Impulsive as he is, his heart is not a bubbling spring of generosity. He cannot put up with vanity even in its most refined form. His strictures are too severe on those who live above their means. He has no sympathy for snobs at any rate. He is like a rugged boulder on the sea-shore defying the wayward excitement and toss of fashion's billows. For he is much surer of his bottom than any captain of the keel of his ship. But often he derives real joy from the sight of truly bold spirits who brave perilous seas.

My guest does not know how to hide the defects of his character. His faults and fancies are as much patent to him as they are to me. What I

know of him is what he himself has told me. His simple heart cannot understand the extreme complexity of the modern world. He believes that his judgment of men and things is infallible. He scarcely thinks men should also be judged from other circumstances and from their behaviour towards persons other than himself.

He is welcomed with warmth at every one of my relatives'. He is the same at every door. His is a never-fatiguing spirit that feels all the elation of being a friend to all. Rich and poor, young and old, the cold as well as the warm-hearted, never consider him as otherwise than pleasing. His round of visits to numerous friends and relatives conduces to my pleasure, for he will be prepared to unburden himself of the rich store of impressions and information, collected during such meetings with his kith and kin.

My favourite guest is a lover of the history of families and their quaint relationships. His heart is eager to sip the honey of some old story, revived with all the sweetness due to the touch of long-forgotten friendship. His mind is ever alert for fresh endeavours in the fields of science and archæology; he can sit for hours together poring over any book treating of those subjects.

He is essentially a domestic figure. Though he can appreciate a speech or criticise it with a wealth of suggestion, he has not even the distant thought of making one himself in public. He always feels an unbounded pride and pleasure in the achievements of any one of us and he delights to dwell on them for long. He is kind but not charitable, frolicsome but not frivolous, proud but not vain. Religion has not laid its firm grasp on him. He wishes to be free from the soul-killing trammels of orthodoxy. When asked once by one of his well-meaning friends why he does not perform his daily *Sandhya vandanam*, his candid reply was, "I shall be content with the heaven of a Sudra, if ever I am vouchsafed one." He lives an honest life and loves Truth which every one of the great religions preaches.

Some are born to do great deeds and some to die obscure. My favourite guest does not belong to either class. He has created in me an interest in the lovable traits of man. His foibles more than his strength endear him to me. He is pure and fresh as the plough-turned soil, only waiting for the gentle drop of rain to smile gratefully. Of course my home does not now inspire him quite so much as when my father was alive. But still his moor-

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ings are cast in our midst. Whenever he is with me, pleasant memories and sweet thoughts are revived. His departure from my home is ever marked by a depression of spirits. I always long for him and his simplicity.

SIR C. P. RAMASWAMI AIYAR

WHEN Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar gets up to address the Judge in Court, the instantaneous effect he produces upon you is, that he is something of an actor posing for an audience, with his head half inclined on one side, his turban almost perching on him without losing its balance, for all the frequent shakes and nods of his head. Then you listen to him. His words flow in profusion, without effort or deliberation; his eye-lids half close and reveal his protruding pupils in a rather sweeping fashion, suggesting the extreme agility with which they can be used. His attraction grows. Personality is a thing which is not possessed by all. It has such an overpowering influence on the mind. It is so with the Rt. Hon. Srinivasa Sastri. His personality captivates you. It fascinates all by its singular charm. The flawless white turban rising above his noble forehead, the immaculate simplicity of his dress with the uppercloth encircling the neck and hanging down the shoulder, the half-amused smile on his compressed lips and

the eyes ready to evince an agreeable surprise at anything and everything in general, invite one and all to have their eyes-fill of gaze at him. No one who has had an opportunity of seeing him with his *dhoti* and long-coat, can wish for any other living picture of perfection. Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar's personality is also fine. It does not bear Sastri's loftiness. It catches you by its brightness. You are feeling ashamed at your own insignificance by his side. He lords it over you. You feel humiliated by the aristocratic aroma about him. You own his great advantages over others.

Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar joined the Bar with two good antecedents. He was the son of Mr. C. R. Pattabhirama Aiyar and he had a distinguished academic career. The one without the other was by itself sufficient to keep him from floundering on the rocks of disappointment. Natural talents aided him to become an outstanding trial lawyer. Quickness of grasp and easy mastery of any subject that is offered, gives him enormous confidence. With his perception sharp, his demeanour perfect, his address over-punctilious, he is impregnable to his adversary when he examines a witness or sums up the evidence. He never fights a point with unbecoming hardihood, when the judge

is against him. Nay, he knows more things from a look, or a word, or a gesture even, of the judge, though he never seems to give any inkling of it to anybody, not even to the junior beside him.

Any day he is sure of his place at the Bar. He moves among his peers, rarely noticing that they are his peers. The high offices he has held sit on him with significance. The judges respect his records; and he knows that too. He addresses them outside the Court with a freedom that is enjoyed by few. He makes a fond display of his courteous habits. In the middle of an argument, his secretary or personal clerk comes and hands him a letter and whispers something in his ear, and he is not deaf or blind to things about him in his concentration on the case. He says, "Beg your Lordship's pardon," snatches the envelope, opens it at once, holds the letter by both the hands, lifts it up almost to his eyes, peruses the lines, making others marvel all the time at his rapidity in reading them, returns it to his clerk saying, "Please ask the man to wait for me at my chamber at two o'clock"—all done in a manner to arrest attention from all around. When the opponent is on his legs, he never meddles with him by word or look. He even resumes his seat automatically when the opponent rises to

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address the judge. He is never lacking in information or a sense of importance. Unless the judges are wary, they are carried away by his eloquence. He brings to bear his wide experience of men and things on his case. He has seen many lands and many faces. He is never slow to impress these facts on others. Of course, he does it in his own polished way. He may be coming out of the court just after his case is lost, but he will never look it. He may even strike you as the victor, till actually you are aware of the facts. He carries himself always with the air of a successful man. He is conscious of eyes gazing wonderingly at him everywhere. As he walks or talks or rushes past in his car, he knows that his presence pervades all.

“Let it not be said of you in after life that your minds have been cribbed, cabined, and confined by the narrowness of your bread-winning pursuits. . . . Nor let the lot be yours, of those who spend the evening of their lives in vain regret, that their early years had no second interest, no field of intellectual labour or enjoyment other than the chosen occupation. . . .” was the impassioned appeal of the late Mr. V. Krishnaswami Aiyar to the assembled graduates of the year in Convocation at the Senate Hall. Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar never

suffers for want of a second interest. Rather he has too many. His vain regret may be that he has not followed any one thing fully. Sanskrit and French always lend flavour to his culture. Horse-riding makes him look gallant, almost like a Rajput prince of old. He rides in company with the Maharani of Cooch-Bihar in the Ooty Gymkhana grounds, or trots gaily through the residential quarters of Mylapore dispensing graceful recognitions on either side of the road. There is nothing that he has not learnt or done in these days of scientific advance. He flies from London to Karachi and speaks of his performance without much excitement.

Combined with great talents, Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar has an energy, diligence, and alertness unequalled by many others of his age and rank in life. He is self-sufficing. From his early morning shave to his evening drive, everything personal is attended to by himself. Nothing is troublesome to him. He can attend office, make calls, write letters, and spare an hour or two for chat at the Club in the evening. No work is too much for him; no labour too unengaging. The Pykhara Electric Scheme never daunted him. He learnt the subject, was busy examining the spot

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with experts, and collected all available information before launching the scheme.

His membership of the Madras Executive Council was a period of enormous activity for him. There was never a Law Member's regime so full of the sensation of a movie. Every day had its functions. From Ooty to Rameswaram, from Rameswaram to Madras, he moved with lightning speed by car or train. Every station waited with garlands for him; every public place heard his voice. None considered him superficial or unimpressive. Students adored him; veterans envied him.

As a good debater in Councils, he has always extorted admiration from even his enemies. An unflinching fighter, he bestows scarcely any thought on rebuffs. For he considers them too common to engage the attention of one like him. If the occasion demands his growing eloquent or furious, he does not hesitate. He can keep at bay a pack of howling wolves. He can crush them with grace, or carry on the game for his own pleasure. Public speaking has never wearied him. From his college days his readiness to make extempore speeches in English has gained him reputation. Ideas or words never fail him, though often the listener gets the impression that he is witnessing a

performance, when, added to his French or Latin quotations, he indulges in artificial poses and articulation.

It was an evening function at the Presidency College. The boys staged the play, Kalidasa's *Sakuntalam*, in Sanskrit. Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar was requisitioned to speak encouraging words to the actors. He got upon the stage and stood in the glare of the foot-lights. He was ready to utilise the opportunity for appearing to the best advantage. He said: "I remember two decades and a half back, my standing on this same stage and acting a part in this very same drama." The students became very eager to hear about it. A mischievous voice from the gallery queried him in a sarcastic tone: "And what were you then?" In a minute came the smart retort: "Let me comfort my interlocutor that I was not then a pretty girl." It is this agility and resourcefulness that bring him undying plaudits. It is all born with him, never achieved.

The Poet Kalidasa wrote in the *Raghuvamsa* that old age announced itself to the King by reaching close to his ears. So do the stray silver streaks near his ears force us to realise that Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar is getting old. For never

in his habits and looks does he convey languor. Full of ambition and hope, he is eternal Youth. Every new prospect of advance in life seems to open before him at his lightest touch. Every fresh turn of fortune seems to find him equal to it.

MR. T. R. VENKATARAMA SASTRI

It was the week following the resignation of Mr. Venkatarama Sastri as member of the Executive Council of the Government of Madras that I happened to be present at a breakfast party at a friend's. Naturally the gossip turned upon the much-talked-of subject of the week. Two of the persons present began to discuss the wisdom of the step that Mr. Sastri took.

"I should think," said the older of the two, "that anyone imbued with a sense of self-respect or genuine patriotism could not have pursued any other course. He has certainly raised our prestige by his act. No purpose could be served if he had wavered or sought counsel of others."

"Oh! certainly," replied the other, "but my surprise is, how he grew so very decisive, of a sudden."

This gives the clue to the general impression Mr. Venkatarama Sastri leaves on others. It may be right or it may be wrong. But it will not be far from the truth to say that he cannot anywhere



bring the force of his personality to bear on the minds of people or on matters requiring his guidance. Anybody else, for a splendid sacrifice like his, would have earned a richer reward. It is not in his nature to seek to strike people as greater than what he is. So much so, a friend of his remarked, when a group of lawyers were discussing the merits of persons at the Bar who could grace the Bench, "True, Mr. Venkatarama Sastri possesses all the requisite qualities of a judge of the High Court. He has stature, brain, discernment and urbanity, but he may not be quite quick to come to a decision."

He is perhaps one of the few honest men at the top in this scheming world of ours. There is no unusual zest for him in a heavy brief calculated to leave a deep mark on the litigant world or increase his credit at the bank. When the Tanjore Palace Appeal came up in 1923, almost all the luminaries of the Bar had a share, or rather felt not having a share was an ignominy. But Mr. Sastri felt no disappointment when he could not be briefed. He heaved a sigh of relief at the good prospect of timely meals after refreshing oil baths. He always courts freedom from the shackles of deep calculation.

The late Sir Walter Schwabe felt, even in the very first weeks of his ascending the Bench as Chief Justice of the Madras High Court, the air in the Court hall fill with a certain amount of dignity and decorum when Mr. Venkatarama Sastri rose to address him. For Mr. Sastri is always fair to his adversary and faultless of language. His tall form adds considerably to his fine deportment. And but for his gait, which occasionally induces one to feel that he would be better even without his shoes on, he is lacking in none of the natural endowments needed to create a very favourable impression at first sight.

It cannot be said of him that he will be quite happy to meet an unforeseen difficulty that may arise, or depend without perturbation upon the inspiration of the moment. He prepares his case and writes his notes in a neat hand on a white paper, which he places before him whenever he argues. He is not all composure, though he rarely loses self-poise. "In those days I never used to be relishing my food for days together, when either Krishnaswami Aiyar or Sundara Aiyar was appearing against me in a case to be reached," said he once in his own unassuming manner. There is not in his advocacy,

any display for the sake of effect or any conscious endeavour to work himself up into a fine frenzy at the prospect of defeat. He can be steady and sure in the face of a losing cause. The sense of duty and the strength of opposition make him rise equal to the occasion. He relies upon an able junior for help and never browbeats him, when himself in a dilemma. With his brows lifted as high as the middle of his forehead, he speaks with a clearness and care, not within the easy reach of many a reputed lawyer. But still it does not entirely convey a feeling of ease and freedom, either in the delivery or in the choice of diction. The effort he makes is more obvious sometimes than even his conquest of correct pronunciation. He is sound and entirely dependable under any circumstance. Nothing but propriety impels him in all the things he does; nothing but chasteness in all the words he uses.

He belongs to the Sivaswamy Aiyer tradition at the Bar. And as one who had his direct training under him, he is not for paying complete homage to law alone. Good books in general allure him. And though not filled with the same spirit of scholarliness that characterises his master,

he has the same breadth of vision and wide culture. Whether in the intervals of Court work, or a music concert, or in a lonely walk, you can find him book in hand with one of his fingers inserted into it, evidently marking a page where he has been reading.

It was an evening. Mr. Venkatarama Sastri was driving in his car along the beach. He saw a junior of his walking on the marina and stopped his car to take him in. As soon as the other was beside him in the seat, he said, "Well, I want to tell you something." But as the car was moving he became silent, while the gentleman by his side was eagerly waiting all the time for the information. The car halted at the Club, and Mr. Sastri got down without a word to his companion and was at the billiards table. The junior, having lingered in his seat for a few minutes, wondered if he was left to himself. He went in and asked him why he was asked to accompany him, whether any urgent business needed him. The strange reply was, "Were you walking on the marina?" Such is his artless forgetfulness. He can be almost staring at you and calling you by a different name altogether. But he is open to admit it unlike many others who do not possess

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the grace to own their foibles. There is nothing to keep him bound to conventions. Age has not soured nor position betrayed him.

“Many must go under if one should go up. It is the passionless rule of life,” writes K. S. Venkataramani. At any rate it applies with some truth to the lawyer’s trade. The successful leader derives no complete satisfaction till he practically captures the entire field. But it is not the case with Mr. Venkatarama Sastri. He never aims at it. If people look up to him, he is not responsible for it. They do it of their own accord. He is free to mix with all and that too most unaffectedly. Now and then he makes an attempt at humour during conversation and watches for its effect on the listener. He has no fund of humour, though he wishes much he had it. But often his simplicity lifts him above the rest who are weighed down by their own importance.

Love of cultured talk and a life of ease are quite as much to him as a healthy body and a good dinner. He is a fast walker not only in level plains but on high grounds and can enjoy good company or a game of billiards. He has no great fascination for the airs of age.

Though not a full-fledged politician of these stirring times, he has all the redeeming virtues of the Liberal fold. He is ever sober and seldom enthusiastic. The agreeable complacency of his party affects him too. His adherence to the Liberal Party is his adherence to the Rt. Hon. V. S. Srinivasa Sastri. It is very often the presence of the Rt. Hon. Mr. Sastri that makes Mr. Venkatarama Sastri a happy man. While many a bit of spicy talk passes round the adoring circle about the Rt. Hon. Mr. Sastri, he is all eagerness and enjoyment to listen to his chief weaving his magic incantations of silvery eloquence.

He has a child-like delight in narrating anecdotes of an ancient origin. You can find him delving into the past without much reverence for old beliefs. Reform and reconstruction of our social fabric have a strong hold on him. But he is very careful not to curb individual thought in others, more so in his children. For he never seems to assume the rigidity of a patriarch and wish his sons and daughters to stand at a distance of abject worship.

As a public man Mr. Venkatarama Sastri has enabled Madras to be proud of him. When the history of the city comes to be written, his name

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will occupy no ordinary place. His high morals and noble instincts will far outlive him. There may not be vigour or brilliance in his utterances on the platform, but always sedateness and sense ; his diction unerring, his aims unpolluted. His qualities never dazzle us but shed a mellow effulgence all round. He is kind, self-revealing and accessible.

His may not be a brilliant record of unsurpassed magnitude. His may not be a career richly fraught with lessons for the lowly and the depressed. Yet he is a stalwart character in the midst of huge wreckages and wayward drifts, a lonely peak among a pile of rugged boulders. For the fine opportunity that was his to wield authority, he revealed his superior nature when he gave it up for the sake of principle. He is a true free-thinker following his own path with a frankness and faith all his own. It is true he often allows himself to be borne along in a pre-occupied state of mind. Perhaps the intricacies of social etiquette or the rigours of a wary householder have no attractions for him. Free from the murmurs of a home, he loves to enjoy a refreshing hour under the Courtallum waterfalls. It saves him worry ; it brings him content.

MY FAMILY FRIEND

BENT with age, yet burning with love for us is my family friend. He has seen our palmiest days with a pride unobtrusive and joy unfathomable, and watches our thinning numbers with a melancholy that sits deep in his heart. It is his innate philosophy that reconciles him to every sorrow that afflicts us. He resembles then the sea-captain, calm and resigned in the face of the foulest weather, but with a stern sense of duty calling him incessantly to action. Though past his seventy, his vigour and vision have not waned for the many tiresome details of his daily routine. His avocations are many, ranging from an active trusteeship of charitable institutions to the enviable post of supervisor of building constructions. We know him as a comforting figure by the side of every sick-bed and a diligent advocate of many a weak and forlorn cause. His intellectual force and intense emotions mark him always from the rest. His high thinking and plain living place him ever with the best.

A pair of penetrating eyes beneath a forehead lined with care for the seething, suffering humanity, and a firm tread that almost convinces anyone of the unbending spirit within, sum up the striking features of my family friend. But often the strange movement of his ear, up and down in frenzy, induces the innocent curiosity of some of us who have keenly watched him in his indignant moods. Of course the yellow-coloured shawl on his shoulder and the folded umbrella below his arm, connote his familiar figure in the streets. There is not a single soul, among those who know him well, that has not felt an instinctive reverence at his sight and an immeasurable strength in his existence. Young and old, man and woman, approach him with a small or a large request. To every one, to the lowest-born as well as the highest, his gentle smile after a patient, attentive hearing of his tale of woe, carries hope and courage. Every dawn finds him busy with a fresh pursuit or silent steady advancement of some favourite object. Through the workings of his mind, one cannot easily find him out. But when all his efforts have ended, the results ever bear him out as the most self-denying of men. Either buried in thought for the sake of an involved litigant or engaged in specula-

tion of betterment for a patient in sick-bed, he is always ungrudging of his concern for others.

My family friend has no traces left in him of the office which once he held with dignity. Though fairly long in service, he never felt any liking for it. Clothed as he was with the power of an Assistant Commissioner of Police, one can rarely find now any vestige of the official spark in his mien. His soft, humble nature was so very unsuited to the exercise of stiff authority. His melting heart could scarcely assume the brusque exterior of repressive force. Report says that, when a retiring European officer asked him "What shall I do for you before I go away?" the strange request in answer was, "Permit me, Sir, to attend office without the encumbrance of a conventional dress." Everybody knows the fact that he left the service much before his time. He was loath to continue in office when nobler objects demanded him outside.

He is perhaps the last of the race of really cultured yet quite unassuming men. Like sunlight to the plant, he is essential to our growth. His personal attachments are as strong as his public spirit. He loved my father too well to fail in warmth towards us. His perception of

an ultimate end for all, has encouraged him to consider the whole human family as his own. Though not blessed with sons and daughters, his unquestioning affection for us all increases my admiration for him. He likes to talk and laugh with children and learn his truths from their babbling mouths. The more he sees Death devastating his dear and near, the lighter the vein in which he appears to speak of it. His wonder grows that the fleeting breath of life should continue its allotted span in the body. His fancies love to dwell on the ecstatic songs of the liberated souls. His tears flow copiously when his whole being is touched by the saddest tunes of the Tamil saints.

It is an irrepressible joy for my family friend to hear a spirited conversation or listen to gifted eloquence. He is not slow to repeat that only one in a hundred happens to possess the powers of an orator. He is visibly drawn towards any great demonstration of such ability. His admiring countenance is sufficient to act as a stimulant to the performer. Though himself a chaste and effective conversationalist, he is not averse to listening with mute surprise to others. The youngest

can engage him in talk without feeling the presence of age in him.

From a highly evolved soul that severed all domestic bonds, he has now easily turned a practical householder. From a total recluse he has changed to a capital diplomat. On the wrong side of seventy, he feels the urge within to do active service to all. He feels rejuvenated by the modern tendencies, even as a gaunt old tree may put forth fresh leaves in a season of plenty. He is quickly gaining more and more up-to-date knowledge from the newspapers. He is counting every minute how more work can be done. His mind gets refreshed by a heated discussion of the present-day politics. He is ever ready to lead a campaign against the Swarajists. For he is such an uncompromising loyalist himself, pinning his faith to the British rule for his country's salvation. His ancient dread of fast locomotives has yielded place to an increasing desire to test every new invention of modern science. He has the nerve to jostle with the crowd for a front seat in the bus. He is prepared even to have a joy ride in one of the Mothplanes over the city.

His retirement from service marks the beginning of a more energetic period in his life. He is

much busier in the mornings than the busiest lawyer of the place. His clientele is greater in number and more varied in their straits. His identification with his client's cause gives almost an impregnable strength to him. He believes not in frontal attacks but in indefatigable sallies into the flanks. He is not baffled in his attempts by any disgust or difficulty. Till success crowns his efforts he is unsparing of his physical and mental labour. He is ready to believe the plaintiff's version of a case and rarely stops to consider the defence side of it. Once he is approached for help, he employs himself, heart and soul, to give the needy all possible succour in his power. He is then industrious like a bee and steady like a clock.

The biography of my father can scarcely be full without the many incidents connected with my family friend. For the brightest patches in that piece will be deriving their freshness and colour from them only. But drawn as my father and his friend were to each other, they could respect each other's independence more with the daily clash of their opinions. Their breadth of outlook and spontaneous charity welded them singularly in the same noble acts and aspirations. If the one

has endeared himself to posterity by his liberal endowments to the public, the other has extorted admiration for the devotion with which he has watched them from running to waste. If it is worthy to give, it is worthier still to cherish what has been given.

When all is said and done, let me render thanks to the Giver for this precious find I have in my family friend. He was everything to us when we were left orphans in this world. It was his prolonged mourning for my father's death that left, in my impressionable childhood, the feeling of an immense loss. Days were, when he could conjure up but one figure for all that is fine and brilliant in man. Even a stray spark emitted by any of us is easily recognised by him as belonging to the fire which once glowed in my father.

In private and in public he is not swayed by the vanities that corrupt men of importance and influence. Though occasionally his eagerness for the interest of one friend may blind him to that of another, he is more pure as tempted more. To me he is a lovable person full of little failings that render him all the more lovable. I honour him for his sacrifices. He always reminds me of the feet of the Lord—"Sri Ramassaranam!"



RAO BAHADUR S.VARADACHARIAR

WHEN an advocate from the mofussil asked a friend of mine what he thought of the dignity of the profession here, he replied, "We are losing much of it. Our leaders, who should set the example, are sometimes as much afraid of setting up standards as the youngest among us."

"Do they then shed no influence on you?" "Why," my friend began sarcastically, "they do. They try to impress us by speaking about themselves, how they flouted a formidable opponent in a case, or took to task a judge for an unhappy remark of his, and so on. Either in the corridors of the High Court or at dinners at friends' houses or at social gatherings, the only topic they can think of is the court and they hold an audience interested in the tales of their own prowess. Naturally re-action sets in. The Bar has its own opinion of those who speak much of themselves. It is the type of Mr. Varadachariar that now commands respect, though it may not compel admiration."

It is said of Mr. P. R. Sundara Aiyar that he invited his juniors to discuss with him legal points that beset him with difficulties. Mr. Varadachariar allows them complete freedom. They are at times even as blissfully ignorant of the method and plan of his argument as the clients who have engaged him. It is amusing to find sometimes Sir Alladi Krishnaswami Aiyar feeling things about him going topsy-turvy, the bundle of papers misplaced, the junior in the case missing, the books for reference wanting or the case itself going against him. Mr. Varadachariar is never forgetful of his things, for all his swelling practice. Rather, he will not be the worse for being a little more forgetful of himself. He waits outside the court-room, walks in quietly, and gets up readily as soon as his case is called. His voice does not rise to a pitch nor do his words flow fast and rich. They are steady and distinct, so as not to leave the listener doubtful of their import. He looks calm and composed though occasions may arise when he grows warm. The red tip of his nose, the knitting of his eyebrows and the scornful smile on his lips, may indicate the rising flame within, which if uncontrolled, would consume Bench and Bar alike. But an un-

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canny expression or want of self-possession never betrays him.

Somebody asked Mr. Varadachariar one day while he was returning to his room for lunch, how the judges were inclined in the big appeal in which he was caught up for nearly a week. He replied, "I think they are against me. They will be doing an injustice, if they decide in favour of my client." He proceeds with a studied detachment which is the despair of many. He becomes only more subtle, the more authorities to the contrary assail him; and the greater the confusion in the case, the clearer he emerges in the end.

Hindu Law is the very breath of his nostrils and his faith is rooted in the wisdom of our ancients. His conviction and lucidity create a feeling all around that his conclusions must be sound. For he is erudite, illuminating and compact. He speaks like a text-writer, and for the time being, both Bench and Bar are the most docile of his pupils, hearing him with absolute confidence.

Sir P. S. Sivaswamy Aiyer, in his address to the apprentices at Law, said once, speaking of an able compeer in the legal profession, that "he liked to hit hard, he enjoyed a good fight and sniffed like a war horse for battle." Mr. Varadachariar never

betrays enthusiasm for his case. He looks neither elated with victory nor depressed for want of it. Indifferent as he seems to many subjects engaging others of his eminence, indefinite he never is, if called upon to express his reasons for being so. He leaves to others the fever and frenzy of an ambitious career. For himself he chooses a quiet hour in the company of his own thoughts or in listening to the disquisitions of the learned of his own philosophical persuasion. He is rarely hearty in conversation, for he believes not in carrying his heart in his mouth to everybody.

He thinks apart and wishes to be untrammelled by the tendencies of the time or the demands of society. Progress and change have left him unshaken. He feels no urge to follow the fashions of the hour. His sash and waistcoat are the vestiges of a past still clinging to him. He cares very little for fleeting remarks or frivolous talk. He seldom endeavours to know what other people think of him. Cricket and field games always entice him; and occasionally he joins in play even with his little boys at home. But his only relaxation after his day's work is over, is to walk on the marina in an unpretentious manner. He prefers generally a single companion to a company of

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familiar faces. He is never too fast or too slow in his walks to be a hindrance to others, but is never too ready to be borne along unconsciously to a point farther than his usual limits.

It is the privilege of those who like him not, to say that he is selfish and severe in his outlook. No doubt, he is lacking in geniality, which makes up for many other defects in a man at the top. True, his scrupulous avoidance of familiarity is freezing. Still he is above the generality of his kind. His mind is different. It is free from excesses and frailties. It keeps up its own level despite the tempests and temptations raging round it. If his master, the late Sir V. Bhashyam Aiyangar was struck by his penetrative brain, or his senior, Sir P. S. Sivaswamy Aiyer was greatly assisted by his infallible knowledge, or the late Mr. V. Krishna-swami Aiyar was impressed by his self-confidence and cogency in discussing legal questions, it only proves the supremacy of his fine intellect. With all that, his distrust in the sinuous methods of the lawyer, assures the lay public of his professional probity. He can be seen at times in court, smiling first a little smile, in his efforts to keep down his anger at the tactics of his learned friends; but if he has a mind to disclose his vigi-

lance, he can be as sharp and pointed as a pin. "I am not aware of any such thing, My Lords!" will be his curt answer, in case he finds confusion engineered by the other side.

Mr. Varadachariar is a straight man loving a quiet life. There is nothing to prevent you from nearing him. He sits at his table in his office in an unassuming posture. None waits on him in attendance, not even a solicitous junior. Neither his status nor his increasing work disturb his equanimity. Nevertheless, he seems not easy of access. His reserve and reticence keep people always at a distance. He does not greet his client or junior with a smile or word inspiring affability. He is 'matter of fact,' and rarely courts wide popularity. He does his duty and stops there, considering it beyond his pale to express his hope of success or failure in the case. He is averse to answering practitioners who query him with regard to the time his case would take. For he expects everybody to be alive to the futility of any such conjecture, so long as he is not the only deciding factor in a court of law. He has no belief in adjustability as a virtue. He declares himself in adequate language, indulges in no make-believes or coloured expressions, and if at all he is sought, people must

be willing to take anything he chooses to grace them with. He must act on his own and scarcely be led.

Behind this stern discipline, one finds a heart not immune to the fervours of religion. He follows his creed with ardour and pursues his philosophy with hope. Prosperity has not outwitted him just as disappointment has not dislocated him. While earning a comparatively small income some years back, he showed no eagerness or anxiety to get more. He felt little embarrassment to own that he had not much work and was prepared for a life of retirement if fortune forsook him. He feels no gnawing discontent that he has still more things to covet. If fame or fortune comes, it should come of its own accord, not of his seeking. His robust optimism is more of the intellect than of the heart. He is one

“ Whose law is reason ; who depends
Upon that law, as on the best of friends”.

From the time he joined the Bar, he has been looked upon as an acute thinker. His articles in the *Madras Law Journal* are marked by sober criticism and courage. He does not make a display of talents, for he does not believe in it. But he is always full without losing brevity, profound

without lacking precision, bold without being bumptious.

It is an interesting speculation what sort of a judge he will be on the Bench of the High Court. Certainly, he cannot sympathise with ignorance or suffer confusion in an argument. He may not be open to conviction by any fresh flood of scrutiny or criticism on the time-honoured conclusions of law. He may prove impregnable to the inroads of eloquence if it is devoid of clarity, for he relies not so much on animation as on analysis. He may not be yielding to mere persuasion. But justice based on law will never be slow to come to his aid. Between man and man, however well or ill circumstanced, great or small, rich or poor, there will be no wavering to do the right thing at the right moment. For he will always pursue the course in calmness made.

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DEWAN BAHADUR T. R. RAMACHANDRA AIYAR

THIS world of ours would be an intolerable place to live in, if we did not know how to look satisfied with ourselves. Perhaps Mr. Ramachandra Aiyar believes in this as a wholesome maxim in life. For he never seems to be affected by worries of any kind. He is all pleasantness and spreads a contagion of contentment on all that approach him. Everybody in the group about him feels that his achievements are in no way inferior to those of other successful men at the Bar. He has not worked very hard, yet the fortune that is his, has been entirely made from the legal profession; he does not court popularity, yet he is chosen unanimously every year for the presidency of the Madras Advocates' Association. Mr. Ramachandra Aiyar himself takes you into his confidence and speaks of his good fortune. He is not quite so astonished at the ways of Providence. He says, "I have always prayed to God and got my returns; why don't you also do the same?"

Yes, you begin to realise a world of truth in what he says. There is nothing which makes you feel uneasy about him. Everything is sound and safe, his keys in a bunch with him, his noon-day siesta quite undisturbed. And though there may be sudden or strange upheavals in our society or politics, they only happen to show by contrast his comfortable self-complacency.

“I have never been in a frenzy over a case nor have tried to slake my parched-up lips with cool drink,” said he once to an attentive audience in the corridors of the High Court. True, he does not feel fidgety because a case of his has been taken up; not even when he is practically unprepared for it. He is not for overloading his aged brain with too many unnecessary details of a case. He is never perturbed even if he does not exactly know for whom he appears. He can easily get over such embarrassments by giving vent to a slightly audible laughter and chiding quite gently his junior for not apprising him well of the facts. He will look so naturally un baffled by such stray inconvenient situations.

There are some persons who do not possess the knack of enlisting the listener's sympathy or attention whenever they indulge in talk pertaining to

themselves. They even create prejudice in others by forgetting certain elementary principles. Mr. Ramachandra Aiyar is careful in securing first a willing audience ready to follow him. He knows the value of a timely reference to the qualities of the persons before him. He tickles individual vanities by saying, "So and so is a very good man; I know him well; he is ever upright" and so on. It gains him any amount of fair wind and weather. There are no shoals or abutting rocks in his smooth passage; no cross-currents or mists to delude or disturb him. He never rubs people on the wrong side nor offends against good taste. He is not averse to exhorting others to follow his own example. For he often reminds his friends, "I do not encumber myself with the unnecessary intricacies of a case. But whenever I rise up in court, I get a happy inspiration to say the proper things at the right moment." It is this cheery confidence when added to his native intelligence that produces often a very good effect on the judges. They are agreeably inclined to hear him speak with assertiveness. The Bar enjoys his racy eloquence. He is never lengthy in his arguments, though ever appealing by his great common-sense. In an appeal where he was fighting for the reduction of the rate of maintenance sanctioned

by the court to the widow in the suit, he said, "My Lords, you are well aware of the conditions of our society. Widows in our homes are ever fond of their domestic work. They love the thing; rather they will starve for want of work. Where is the purpose in allowing them a larger portion? It is not their status, but their time-honoured habits that have kept them safe hitherto from the unhealthy influence of luxuries." Such breezy good things are not often heard in the High Court, where heavy, legal arguments alone prevail with the judges.

When the country is passing through a transition, when progress is invading every nook and corner of our social life, Mr. Ramachandra Aiyar stands up for everything old that is sanctioned by religion. He is really a 'glorious pillar of unshaken orthodoxy'. But he is rather more devout than learned. He seldom fails to be present at religious gatherings. His kindness to the down-trodden race of *Vaidik* Brahmins is well known to every one. He loves to hear them chant the Vedas at the top of their voices after they have received their remuneration. He stints in his generosity to other causes for the sake of being liberal to the forlorn sons of unpolluted orthodoxy.

He always feels a partiality for their cause and thinks that if only they are as careful as he is, they can be sure of living up to high ideals.

If he is called upon to speak at any social gathering, he is sure not to bore you. For he is short as well as happy in the sentiments he expresses. His freedom from labour in shaping his ideas always carries the audience with him. People like him and his words of advice. "Look at me," he would say, "I am more than seventy. I have sons and daughters. None of them lacks stature or stamina. I was married very early. Why should people believe that early marriage is a great evil? If only you knew how I live, you can flout all these modern cants." Indeed it is a telling argument and it is one of the few weapons with which he was armed in the battle against legislation for restraining child-marriage. He led the deputation to Simla to voice forth the views of the orthodox section against the Sarda Act and returned highly pleased with himself and his mission. He answered the queries about the success of his trip thus, "The Private Secretary to His Excellency the Viceroy was simply repeating to me 'Dewan Bahadur, men of your capacity should be in the Assembly'."

Many irksome situations in Court dislocate even persons of disciplined mind. Mr. Ramachandra Aiyar is no exception to it. But he can use his anger to help his cause. The Judge was once plying Mr. Ramachandra Aiyar with too many difficult questions. Mr. Ramachandra Aiyar was visibly impatient. He observed, "If your Lordship goes on talking at this rate, how am I to speak?" The Judge was a little upset and said, "No, Mr. Ramachandra Aiyar, I am only trying to aid you by my doubts and difficulties. You can understand my point of view and try to give proper solutions to the problems that arise in my mind. I generally find the Bar not appreciating my questions to them. If only they pause awhile to consider why I put them such questions, they would not view them as impediments to their progress." Mr. Ramachandra Aiyar was again saying, "Still your Lordship will not allow me to have my say." The Court was shaken with laughter.

To-day he stands out as one of the very few prominent members of the Bar who have seen Justice Muthuswami Aiyar or argued before him. He is therefore full of anecdotes of bygone times. It is his pride that he has ever steered clear of

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rough waters. It is his satisfaction that he has never prospered by favouritism. There are not many rises or falls in his career. It has been long and steady. Others imagine he awaits his retirement from the Bar any day. But he has no such attraction for the joyless life of retirement. He is practical and knows the value of an old man's influence amidst the younger generation. None of the modern craze for expenditure has any hold on him. He avoids the metropolis as much as possible and stays there only as long as his business demands him. He has been ever secure from the impulsive demands on his purse. He hastens back to his home in distant Malabar where his joys and sorrows are shared by him exclusively with his own kith and kin.

He is one of those few men at the Bar who remain strong against the virulent inclemencies of weather. His independence is ever inspiring. If the Judge behaves bumptiously, he is ready to retaliate. Once a heckling Judge became openly nervous on seeing him remove his spectacles and prepare himself for an effective defence. But he knows when to employ his favourite strokes. He does not brandish them in season and out of season.

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If his legal erudition were equal to his courage and amiability of temperament, he would be really unequalled at the Bar. But he never believes in storing up so much knowledge. "Mr. P. R. Sundara Aiyar was always reading the law, and what did he achieve except hasten his own premature end?" said he once to an old acquaintance. He was then beaming with the thought of his own life, well lived and properly maintained. He is a robust optimist with few misgivings. May he continue to inspire us with his message of health!

MY TEACHER

My teacher of childhood days is a short plump figure, quite springy of body and of spirits. Though every one of us dreaded him and his threats when we were one of his flock, we have begun now so much to like him and his ways as to accord him the place of a regular confidant of our hearts' secrets. For he has the rare prudence and tact to adjust himself to individual idiosyncracies, and has not much aversion to play even the second fiddle to us at times. Before trying to study the mentality of the children tendered unto his care, he understands with considerable shrewdness the proclivities and prejudices of their parents. Especially careful is he about the mother and in no time secures her good opinion, which means, all the choicest preparations of the house are known to him earlier than to anybody else. But his familiarity never assumes freedom with women. He has the saving commonsense to be conscious of his place in the scheme of things. He is fond of eating good things and his appetite shows no

weakening for all the little worries of the world. He grudges none his wealth.

He was, till recently, a teacher of our local High School, holding supreme sway over a small section in the lower secondary forms. He is master of a little arithmetic, which, with much ado, he can always be sure of. Indian History is with him a favourite, and never was a boy in his class without experiencing a strange delight at his method of teaching. His native talents for histrionic display impelled him often to pose, now as the princess Samyukta with the garland, now as the Emperor Akbar himself, having for the Imperial throne of Delhi a wooden chair, and for the sceptre, the cane with which he meted out punishment to the truants. His loud guttural tones, when he taught religion and morals, attracted boys and masters of the nearer class-rooms. His efficiency as a school-master depended on the cheerful countenance he wore before the tender, playful children. Why, by his very readiness to throw off any weight from his heart, he glides well through life, even as a log when scooped to shape floats lightly on the billows.

The imagination of young minds felt not the curb in his care; for he gave ample scope to

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their frolics and even joined them in their merry sports. Each boy in his class was labelled with a nickname that was either aptly descriptive of his physical contour or highly suggestive of his brain capacity. And it was a constant source of diversion both to the teacher and to the taught to hear the names repeated in quick succession to an amused audience, composed of masters and pupils of the other classes. He has a leaning towards the rich and the offspring of magnates are ever his dear concern. His cleverness in managing his class and his smooth contact with his superiors are the despair of many others who try to follow in his wake. The story runs that, during his early career as a teacher, he once got information of the intended surprise visit of an Inspector of Schools. He kept it a secret within himself and was alert in his duties. The rest of the classes were either unruly or dozing, steeped in ignorance of the impending danger. Only my teacher was piously teaching geography to the boys with the aid of a big map, which, being a novel feature, received the rapt attention of the whole class. The Inspector came and found the whole school in extreme disorder. The only man that was near his heart was my teacher and the instantaneous reward of such capital teach-

ing was his promotion to the next higher form along with a good remark in the report.

My teacher is invariably the private tutor to all the well-to-do boys of the place and naturally excites the envy of his colleagues. The time-honoured traditions point him as an inevitable appanage to the prosperous families of the locality. He was once endearingly styled by one of the leading men of the town as the "generalissimo of our Luz forces". His practical sense and prudence are solely responsible for his assiduity in trying to prove useful to all, especially to those in position. None can miss him at marriage feasts or important functions in the higher circles.

Though not wise enough to discern greatness in people, he has the faculty to worm himself into their favours, once their title to recognition is established. There is in him just the proper admixture of native traits and intelligence which lead him on to fresh conquests. Weak as his flesh may be, his spirit is willing, and while age is corroding his heart, he is able to evoke the same old lively interest from his patrons and friends. And it is a frequent sight to find him engaged in familiar conversation with almost every one on the road, be he the most noteworthy or the least

significant person. For never does he betray physical fatigue, despite his declining years, in going on errands or doing kind offices to those who need help. With the peculiar knack of acquitting himself well with men in general and with women in particular, his services at marriage alliances are greater. His pride is, that rich and poor, all and sundry, resort to his note-book where all the horoscopes of the prospective bridegrooms are contained. He is a good mediator and excels in the art of exaggeration.

He has not much education and cannot make fine distinctions of character. But accustomed to the ways of the rich, he manages to hide his drawbacks. He can attempt to be sage-like in his counsel with the serious-minded and frantic in his frolics with the light-hearted. He can change his airs to the moods of people. In the presence of the prodigal he is callous to the core, but with the shrewd and the careful, he evinces a feeling of responsibility and even devises methods of economy.

He is always delighted to know the lucky and the prosperous. For he never makes a secret of his admiration for Fortune's chosen few. He pities those who are not favoured despite all their qualities. He is not tired of harping on the maxim,

"These attributes won't do for this practical world."

He is prepared to spare only those in position for the slights that he may have to bear occasionally at their hands. For he will retaliate whenever he is meddled with by those of the ordinary rank. Though he is all sense and propriety to the world in general and prepared to regret the fact that many abandon all principles when they become borrowers, he is unaffected personally by such scruples. It is very difficult for him to part with money. He has scarcely known the day when he has with generous impulse given a pie to a beggar. For he was brought up in ideas of the strictest economy of living.

With all his weaknesses, he is still the same old teacher to me. Like the ripples of the mid-ocean, his emergence and disappearance in this world may signify nothing to the public at large. But to me and to those who know him intimately he is a potent instrument for self-forgetfulness. His presence clears the gloom of my house and his conversation acts as a lubricant smoothening all the parts into working order. He has become more akin to me with the passing of years. His reverence for my mother's memory which is ever seeking an outlet in a string of praises at the men-

tion of her name, knits me closer to him. For he remembers still with pride her great satisfaction in seeing him fed sumptuously. Howsoever the rest of the world may consider him, he is as familiar to me as the very sod under my feet. I cannot but choose him, for

“So long *has he* been with us
And such joys *has he* seen with us.”

DR. S. RANGACHARI

THERE is no other person here who is more talked of to-day than Dr. Rangachari. He is very different from the other members of his profession in his manners and methods of treatment, as in his habits and achievements. He is one of the few to drive a Rolls Royce. He is among the first to own a Puss-moth.

Before the sun actually ascends the sky he is seen dashing past in his huge car. He is a phantom of brightness when first he gleams upon your sight. His clear look beneath a shining bald head is only equalled by the polished exterior of his own car. You stand attracted by the handsome car and its fine driver. You salute him and there is the prompt return to your courtesies, despite the speed of the machine or the seemingly unobservant gaze. There is a great satisfaction in you that you have been noticed as well as greeted in return. It has become almost habitual with one and all to think of him with pride and speak of him with pleasure. His plain, white, drill



trousers well matched with his white canvas shoes, his soft but fast gait, his scanty but distinct speech, his unassuming but distinguished appearance, have all become the singular characteristics of the man. Stop him anywhere on the road as he speeds on, he instantaneously applies his foot to the brake and enquires in a resonant, drawling tone, "What's the matter?" He is told an urgent case is awaiting him. He does not mind his own convenience but turns his car towards the place where he is wanted, without another word.

Quickness is the secret of his success. In a second his eyes survey the entire ground and take stock of the situation. No sooner does he enter the patient's room than he emerges from it. His work is finished. He has felt the pulse, asked the person most concerned a question or two, but never waited to listen to the many details volunteered by the rest around the sick bed. Either he does the needful without delay or deems the matter so simple as not to be much worried over. There is no indecision of any kind. There is no wavering for the sake of pleasing any one, not even the patient in his care. If he finds the condition grave or demanding greater attention, he says, "Well, I shall be back in a few minutes", and rolls

away without any more ado or exchange of word. It seems quite like clock-work, his getting down at a patient's and his silent resumption of his seat near the steering wheel of his car. None dares to disturb him in his rapid strides to the car; none considers it safe to approach him with any anxious question regarding the patient.

Should every man perform his duty as Dr. Rangachari, the world will be a better place. Neither for recognition nor for reward does he toss about the livelong day, saving hundreds of lives from the jaws of death. He is even more prompt to respond to urgent calls at night. For he knows the fatal hours of gloomy night require the ministering aid of a doctor. Unsparing of his resourceful brain and unstinting in his physical energies, he is equal to any great effort. To the last his persevering intellect knows no fatigue. Only when he is sure that the mortal mist has gathered about the poor victim, does he retrace his steps slowly and silently, though never, in his heart, resigned to the working of a higher Power. For he seems not to reckon God in any form or shape. When a patient was found with a book in hand, Dr. Rangachari asked him what he was reading. "I am getting by heart some songs in praise of

the Lord to relieve me of this dire malady", said he in reply. "Well, you might as well pray to Him to enable me to diagnose your disease", was the somewhat sarcastic remark.

None else could claim to have so completely driven out the European from competition in the field of surgery in Madras as Dr. Rangachari. His reputation as a first-class surgeon remains unchallenged. He possesses a sure hand aided by a powerful intellect. It is encouraging to find him moving in the operation theatre without the least trace of agitation about him. His very presence fills every one with unbounded confidence. He looks neither careworn nor complacent. Always bent upon giving succour, he knows of no other thought inspiring him to action. There is almost a note of authority in his voice which demands unquestioning submission from his subordinates. His assistants, all of them young aspirants, are ever alive to his extraordinary qualities. They are trained to be alert and brisk. The uncontrollable crowd of varied humanity seeking consultation with him in his Nursing Home attest to his considerable practice. Everywhere about him can be found the influence of his personality. In the very gait and dress of his assistants can be traced the object of their emulation.

There is almost an automatic regulation in his meeting his clientele. Without a minute wasted people are ushered in, one by one, by an over-vigilant junior outside. Either the consultation fee is paid on the spot or deferred to a future occasion, as it may suit the convenience of the customer or the demands of courtesy. There is no slackening in his fullest attendance on you in spite of your standing in arrears to him. There is ever his agreeable voice or penetrating look to disengage you from your pre-occupations. He does not wear grave airs or a solemn countenance conveying an idea of his own importance. He relieves the nervous agitation of the heart by an unostentatious prescription. Sometimes the patient is even anxious that the doctor might pronounce him to be free from actual complaint. For Dr. Rangachari believes not in drugging the system. The moment there is a rally, he stops his function and allows nature to do her own. Nothing so much pleases him as a good regulation in diet. He is never tired of advising people to take in any amount of fruits and green vegetables. He is pre-eminently a safe physician.

Somebody asked Dr. Rangachari when he purchased a very expensive car, why he should

lavish so much money on a conveyance. His answer was, "Why do people spend so much in building houses? Is it not for making their permanent habitations more comfortable? So also with me, when I have to live nearly always in my car." But if he has now bought a Monoplane, it does not so much show his desire to add to his costly appurtenances as his readiness to help suffering humanity without losing time or reckoning distance. Everywhere people acclaim him as a rare personality. He does things in his own unique fashion. There is no flutter or frivolity in his conversation, though people might wish for more of geniality in him.

"And what sort of a man is he?" is the question always on everybody's lips. His reserve and studied avoidance of society have ever been attributed to a desire to be singular in his habits. Rather he finds time too precious to devote to other claims on him. Save for a few hours of undisturbed slumber in the afternoon and a quiet walk in the evenings, he feels no hour free from taxing work. He never complains nor looks fussy. He seems to take life much at its own tremendous speed. There is no faint-heartedness in his march towards the goal; no lack of courage to forge his own implements.

He never lingers, never pauses; but ever and anon spins out a higher destiny.

There is a type that can be hardly uninteresting, even if it is not really inviting. Dr. Rangachari belongs to that type. He avoids company; he escapes conviviality. But he ever seems to be more deep than what he really is. His incisive humour and caustic tongue can easily divert us if he only cares to. But occasionally his sharpness is startling and his silence unbecoming. An irrelevant question or conversation is treated by him with more indifference or contempt than it deserves. But his heart is philanthropic to the core. The thought of parting with money never causes him the slightest uneasiness. He is kind, considerate and good.

Into a career of a score of years and more, he has crowded so much of ability and predominance as a doctor. In the brief span of less than a decade his reputation has mounted very high for treating the poor and suffering without expecting much of remuneration. He has 'raised himself by the use and ruined himself by the abuse' of his enviable health. He has now lost much of his former flush and bloom. But still he goes on, and in the hour of need, like an angel he appears.

MR. S. SATYAMURTHI

It was the opening session of the Madras Legislative Council after the general elections in 1923. The Council hall was getting full before the usual hour. The visitors' galleries were packed from floor to ceiling. The passages and corridors were crowded with students who could not gain admission inside. The first resolution to be moved that day in the House was that of 'No-confidence' in the new Ministry. Excitement pervaded the atmosphere. Mr. C. R. Reddy, the mover, spoke with moderation and elegance like a born debater. Speaker after speaker followed him in support of the resolution. The Ministry made but a feeble effort to withstand the volley of charges against it. Just after 3-30 in the afternoon rose a defiant figure from his seat with a face indicating derision at the whole race of office-seekers. A fresh enthusiasm ran through the serried ranks of visitors both above and below. The Ministers were afraid to meet the fervent gaze and frenzied phrases of the speaker. Every one of the sentences he uttered

bore an emphasis. His attack was direct and determined. His looks were rivetted on the opposite benches. His voice grew strong and steady. Humour and eloquence distinguished him from the rest. "These three Ministers do not exhaust the possibility of ministerial talents in this Presidency देशो विशालः प्रभवोऽप्यनन्तः" he exclaimed, and the whole House became tense with expectation. There was an effective and detailed tirade against the reactionary policy of the Ministry that had come into office again. When the late leader of the Justice Party was dealt with in his turn, an indistinct protest rose from that old man, but the reverberating voice of the President hushed everything into silence when he commanded, "Mr. Satyamurthi will proceed." There was once more a driving torrent of words. The more the obstacles in his way, the greater seemed the volume and flow of his eloquence. None dared to interrupt him again. None looked cheerful on the Ministerial side, and a death-like gloom overhung them when he wound up the peroration with a bold prophecy, "I already see the hand of Death upon the Ministry. It is not permanent. It is bound to die. When it dies, it will die unwept, unhonoured and unsung."

It is all very characteristic of Mr. Satyamurthi. It forces the mind to recall another occasion, when an American professor was in Madras and a public meeting was convened at the Gokhale Hall to welcome him. Mr. Satyamurthi was asked to take the chair. The professor spoke about the great events happening in the West, the Christian spirit of tolerance and propaganda that actuated reformers there, the great advance of Socialism in Europe, the unsparing endeavours of true Christians to perpetuate peace and good-will in the world, and his own high hopes of the mission of the East. Mr. Satyamurthi made his concluding remarks. "Let not the Christians think of peace and good-will only on Sundays", was one of the first few utterances from his lips, and the foreigner sat wondering at the speaker's natural humour and courage on the platform.

"It must be remembered that in the delivery of a long speech emphasis should be economised, so that the voice may not get unduly taxed" says the book on 'The Making of an Orator'. Mr. Satyamurthi does not care for any such economy however long he may harangue. The lingering pauses that lend distinction to the Rt. Hon. Sastri's

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speeches have no allurements for him. He is always ready to rise up and speak with feeling. If an audience requires stirring up, his is the voice that can rouse the emotions. It is not sweet to the ear but sufficiently lusty to reach the vast crowds on the sands of the beach. His manner is not imposing but ever direct and appealing. His speeches have no agreeable spray of faultless pronunciation and finish; but always a great satisfaction fills you that his words are happy and ideas clear. The study of his own literature "infuses him with the inspiration for his ideas and with the philosophical justification or the enlightened impetus for his boldness, zeal and patriotism." The great Ruskin said, "Language becomes accurate if the speaker desires to be true; clear, if he speaks with sympathy and a desire to be intelligible; powerful, if he has earnestness; and pleasant, if he has sense of rhythm and order." Mr. Satyamurti has almost all these. He does not lack information. He pauses not for expression. He can be fresh and fascinating in his anecdotes. He can be catchy and catholic in his tastes.

It is quite obvious that "if the man who does not hesitate to speak his mind freely in a private

company, could imagine, when he faces a public audience for the first time, that he is going to have a little talk with a few friends, he would conquer the initial difficulty of extempore speaking." But with Mr. Satyamurthi, it must have been just the other way about. He seems never to have known what it is to be nervous or to speak less freely his mind to a large audience. Nothing deters him from exposing his foes to ridicule and contempt. Neither position nor age has any restraining influence on him. The Liberals had their share of his ungrudging attentions. The Ministerial party suffered long at his hands. The Government every time had to face opposition from him when they wanted to introduce a bill in the Council. He took in everything at a first glance. Nothing could escape him; nothing unnerve him. He provided himself with ammunition every time he sallied forth for battle. He returned unexhausted for all the rebuffs he received. Crowds cheered him; councillors respected him.

Mr. Satyamurthi is an immense force in himself. He can never be employed or dictated to. It must please him to carry out other people's behests. He must have his own way in everything. He must make his bold assertions. He must plunge

headlong into a scathing criticism or a sweeping contradiction.

“Perhaps my imperfect knowledge of Sanskrit is alone responsible for my great love of that language. But I am sure, I will yield to none in my appreciation or attachment for it,” said he once in a speech at the Madras Sanskrit Academy. The latter part of his assertion is amply justified by the vigour and consistency of his fervid appeals at the proceedings of the Senate and Academic Council of the Madras University. His faculty for debate and grip of facts have never abandoned him while engaged in those protracted deliberations. He reads the files, prepares himself, if necessary, for an onslaught on his opponents, and brandishes his favourite weapon in utter disregard of any attempt to control him. He brings judgment and purpose to his aid. His arguments contain cogency and colour and never betray lack of pre-meditation or presentation. He rarely sleeps when long vigils are called for. Every strategic move will be adopted for winning a point; every resource resorted to for gaining his object. His opponent fears to successfully withstand him, when he is put down for moving a resolution.

Politics being his sole pursuit in life, he does not feel himself overburdened by it. Art and music have their place in the scheme of his many diversions. He loves to display his versatility. The Sanskrit and Tamil amateur dramatic stages have had a peculiar attraction for him from his boyhood. His natural gifts find him an easy prey to the consuming desire of winning applause at every turn. His acting is at its best when the part chosen by him is in line with his own prominent qualities. He is impressive as an impetuous Asvathama and unsurpassed as an indignant Sarngrava. His pre-disposition for declamation and passion clothe him in good form, when the audience needs spirit and flame on the stage.

It may look somewhat unusual that a man of his impatience or inflammable temper could ever have the softness to be ensnared by music, and more so by that of the feminine voice. He has an inborn inclination to be moved to great emotions. A good concert generally fails not to impress him. His knowledge of its intricacies may be limited, but his desire to appreciate its delicacies is abundant.

Born with every fine attribute for a life of ease and æsthetic enjoyment, his career as a Congressman has left his deeper desires unsatisfied. He

loves to lead others and distinguish himself wherever he be, whether in the vast assemblies of men or on the stage. The spirit of self-abnegation and discipline, so strongly advocated by the Gandhian creed, finds him unwilling to yield himself to its influence. His manhood thirsts not for self-reformation but for wresting power from a determined foe. Progressive as he is in his political slogans, conservative he has grown by experience. Though, in the plenitude of his youth, he once followed modern ways in the wake of Western fashions, he has given up everything foreign to him and his race with the pledging of his faith to the cause of winning Swaraj for his country.

“The man who cannot be loud, or even vociferous, on occasion, is wanting on the jovial side of good fellowship” wrote Leigh Hunt in his short essay on ‘Table-Talk’. Mr. Satyamurthi does not stop there but makes thinking aloud his prime care. He does everything in public. His sharp remarks and trenchant observations create for him enemies in every field of activity. At home his sway is of a stern kind. He rarely allows anything to pass unnoticed by himself. Even his little daughter must choose the hour for her tyranny over him.

He may suddenly explode with a strong expression or develop into a heartless censor.

As a host he is kind, as a conversationalist effective. There is almost a straight question from his lips when he greets you for the first time in the day. With young and old he engages in earnest discussions. The younger more particularly invigorate him. Free and hearty, he is entertaining to all in no little measure.

Perhaps few others have so much impressed the outer world of the immense potentialities of South India in the realm of mass-moving oratory as Mr. Satyamurthi. His name conjures up in the interior of the Tamil land a picture of animation combined with the full articulation of a nation's indignation against the wrongs done to it. He is supremely emotional and his deeper springs bubble with love for his race and its religion. His faith lies rooted in the ancient books and he fondly repeats many a pithy verse from them. He wields his mother tongue with the same force and deftness as his English. He sends thrills through the vibrant frames of many a fervent youth. He is among the first-born of Renascent India.

In a free country, Mr. Satyamurthi would any day realise his permanent rewards. His

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powerful tongue and alert intellect can divert the fruitful sources of our national culture into channels of universal recognition. His glowing spirit never deserts him despite the conflicts he is sometimes engaged in. He thinks for himself and speaks for others.



MR. K. S. VENKATARAMANI

It is rarely that a poet is made in the uncongenial atmosphere of the Law. Rarer still that he is applauded by contemporary opinion. Mr. Venkataramani is admired, honoured and sung. He is a fine representative of our thought revival and the first Indo-Anglian writer in South India to be crowned with laurels.

Mr. Venkataramani beamed upon the literary sky a decade back, scattering all his rich and mixed metaphors on a world unsuspicious of so fine a penman in him. It was like the shower of manna to the parched-up soul of South India. It cleansed our putrid notions. It brought upon us a real change. There was a live note in him urging us back to a chaster life. It was an omen for good. It came with the first delirium of the non-co-operation movement. Everything belonging to us assumed a dimension altogether different. Everything gained a prestige and value. Reaction filled the air. Patriotism surged up in every channel of our activities. Nothing could make us

forget our institutions, pure of origin. Nothing could keep us away from all that was peculiar to the Indian genius or thought.

Mr. Venkataramani is essentially a writer of reaction. He paints the rich side of life as once lived in peace and plenty, far from the maddening strife of urban competition. Hailing from one of the ancient villages of the fertile Tamil land, he pines away under the crushing sorrow, that agriculture has gradually ceased to engross the landlord and peasant. He is too unsparing in his criticism of the evils of the present system. He is too optimistic of his message proving the only solution. "The greatness of the individual in literature was to be measured by the power to present a view of life, to interpret the world" wrote an English critic. Judged by it, Mr. Venkataramani's claim to distinction can never be challenged.

When a group of friends were discussing his latest book, one of them sarcastically remarked, "Mr. Venkataramani occasionally slips into English." There was a burst of laughter in which the author himself joined; for the harmless fun proved too good to resist. The fun was all in the

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exaggeration. But it implied something rather than nothing. True, Mr. Venkataramani thinks in his own tongue and does not stoop to give his thoughts an alien colouring. For his genius lies in preserving individuality and in creating a distinct atmosphere altogether native to the soil. Scarcely anything breathing a sense or sentiment other than his own, emerges from him. Only the garb he chooses is often English, because nothing so much actuates him as the desire to interpret every bit of our life and traditions to the outer world.

If anybody could avoid reading much of others lest his own freshness of fancy might get impaired, it is Mr. Venkataramani. He is so jealous of his own powers of imagination. He knows his distinction in Letters will be real only if he retains completely the colour of his surroundings. Keen in observing the simpler folk, he has an innate leaning towards making the Indian village his anvil on which to hammer all his thoughts into shape. There is a characteristic gait and grace of his pen when it portrays his consuming love for his race, in the language of humour and pathos, so seemingly opposed and yet so strangely akin to each other.

Our impressions of men from their writings may not always agree with our notions of them from personal knowledge. Or often what we visualise is sadly different from what we actually realise. A little head bearing a tiny tuft on its top, an abrupt chin somewhat too small for the face, and a sly glance at the very corner of his spectacled eyes, go to make or rather mar the personality of Mr. Venkataramani. If fashion be discarded as a vice, no better example can be had than he. Wearing a turban which adds nothing to his forehead and a closed coat quite unpretentious, he defies the modern world with its ultra-sartorial perfection. To the reader at large, he is nothing more than a dreamer, very fanciful, very unworldly. Strangely enough he is not. He knows how to secure for himself an enduring string of praises. You find him scarcely looking enthusiastic when, taking out of his pocket a letter or newspaper-cutting containing an appreciation or review of his latest book, he places it just in the midst of a group of fellows at the table of the Advocates' Association. For he very wisely values the famous dictum of Margot Asquith, "Get discussed, whether praised or abused." It is the easiest passport to a wider recognition of your-

self. Nothing pertaining to his achievements, he wishes to keep a secret. On the other hand he distrusts modesty which may stifle all fair chances of acquiring a self-surpassing state of mind. After all, the world, every one knows, is only too slow of recognising people who are not active in soliciting its attention.

There was an evening function got up in honour of Mr. Venkataramani at the Gokhale Hall. His Holiness The Acharyaswami of Kamakoti Peetam sent an ivory shield to be presented to the author as a token of his blessings upon his literary career. Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar presided. After a happy speech in English he gave away the lovely souvenir. Mr. Venkataramani said in the course of his reply, "The more I lift one foot from the mire of selfishness, the deeper goes the other down." He seemed then in a sincere mood. He moved the hearers by the fine sentiment. It is poetic; it is pathetic; it is everything else but what he is.

"Goldsmith," said Dr. Johnson to Boswell, "should not for ever be attempting to shine in conversation; he has not temper for it. . . ." It must be said of Mr. Venkataramani that he has too much temper for it. His eyes twinkle at the sight of a group of friends determined to talk away their

time, and his seemingly sluggish tongue is only too ready for piling up metaphors. His tendency to be vain has not robbed him of his delicate sense of humour in conversation. Spicy and unobtruding, he attracts always a congenial circle of listeners. He is neither vulgarly garrulous nor irreproachably refined. He pelts the placid surface with tiny, shining pebbles and enjoys a good hour watching the water break into ripples. He is never carried away by wasting vehemence or irregular moods. He can be brief as well as long in his conversation. He can even cut short an interesting talk in the middle, if private business calls him elsewhere. He is shrewd and steady about his own purpose in life. He can be least fussy and yet divert the talk to himself. His archcleverness lies in his not alienating anyone in this attempt.

But he is fundamentally generous. His sympathies are ever great for the poor and the needy. His insight into the workings of the human heart does him credit, when he is kind and considerate to all. Many a youth fired with ambition to cut out a literary career for himself goes not in vain to him. Mr. Venkataramani feels the want of a literary tradition in this country and would lose

no opportunity to gain it by welcoming fresh talent into the field.

Born of forefathers whose 'seven hundred acres have dwindled to seven' in his own time, Mr. Venkataramani has inherited no unbecoming trait of thriftiness. He relishes good dishes and stints not in his enjoyment of a fine repast in the company of friends. He displays then, all the ado and abandon he is capable of, in seeing others sumptuously fed. Hardly a dinner or supper at a friend's will be missed by him when invited. He is prompt and enthusiastic in his response. There is an agreeable cordiality and dignity in his behaviour towards strangers and a sense of propriety in his relationship with friends. He is never harsh in his speech or fiery in his temper. He does not make much of uncompromising principles in life. He is supremely a man of the world.

It is wise for an author not to be impatient in launching his first book into the world. Mr. Venkataramani's absorbed wooing and constant pruning of his first collection of essays for nearly seven years have assured him the rare success which he most coveted. And once ensured, it ensures him, at every succeeding publication, a wider recognition and popularity.

MY PUNDIT

BORN in the line of his forefathers, my pundit claims a rich heritage of learning. But with the decay of the beautiful Indian village, his power and pride have waned. Though reconciled to his vocation in life, he does not wish his innocent progeny should follow him. He would rather have his son educated in an English school than see him learn his first lessons in Sanskrit in the time-honoured way. He is prepared for any number of compromises if ultimately they would lead to personal profit. Though himself a champion of orthodoxy, he has a lurking fear that his own son or grandson may prove faithless. His fascination for urban life has bred in him the craving for more wealth. His exodus from peaceful riverside resorts to the feverish bustle of the city has brought on him this discontent.

My pundit has a personality which very few among his kind possess. His tall form and stout frame leave nothing to be desired in his appearance. And the red shawl, bordered with embroidered

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gold hanging from his high shoulders, adds prestige to his presence. Conscious of his own physical advantages, he is unsparing in his remarks of those who are poorly equipped by nature. His posing before the mirror in my house has confirmed him in his just pride. Fresh with the white beaming stripes of ashes on his forehead, chest and arms, and with the well-sized *Rudraksha* beads encircling his neck, he is armed to the teeth against the whole world. No amount of withering contempt can drive him away from a decisive victory.

True to the habits of his great ancestors, he bathes in cold water at the first call of the crows, and performs his *Sandhya* prayers. But if he is disturbed often in his meditations by the wholesome flavour of his morning coffee, it is his fine tastes that stand the test. He does not, of course, believe in prolonged *Pujas* or ablutions when a spicy repast is in store for him. Left to himself, he is not for eschewing everything that is modern.

My pundit is much more blessed with the good things of life than many others of his forlorn race. Either the careful management of his parents or his own prudent economy has preserved

him and his family from the wayward blasts of chill penury. Owning a house and a few acres of the best lands in his village, my pundit is well-nigh desirous of being termed a landlord. But practical sense counsels him against discarding the appearance of being poor and helpless. Because, status is a grave disqualification for success in his profession. He considers any remuneration insufficient for his superior talents. In reciting the *Sama Veda* he is perhaps unparalleled. Distinct of voice, he is articulate and effortless, and with his long arms lifted by degrees in accompaniment to the increasing cascades of melodious chanting with which he fills the air, he cannot be missed in the drowning chorus of a vast concourse. He is without the snail-like slowness of his compeers; he has push and punctuality, which easily recommend him to recognition. Being an adept in the art of flattery, he can safely sail on rough seas. His subtle methods, even when they are discovered, fail not to keep hearts bound in submission. He is a skilful navigator in strange waters and can land at unknown ports. But if his expectations meet with a reverse, he is as severe in his open resentment as the gipsy beggar when denied alms.

On a fine, auspicious morning, my pundit visited my town, imagining a dearth of all ancient ideals in the capital city, where inroads into the ramparts of orthodoxy are but inevitable. But to his agreeable surprise, he found a ready market for all his wares. His appeal met with a sympathetic response. His round of visits to the richer quarters encouraged him in his far-reaching hopes. With his deep insight into human frailties, he knows the potency which praise of men in the superlative degree can achieve. His ambitions find a sure path when to his native tact is added his knowledge of Sanskrit lore. His brain is ever alert in devising new avenues for tapping fresh sources of income. He can give discourses ably from the *Ramayana*, *Bhagavata* and other *Puranas* and make them occasions for receiving rare presents both in cash and in kind. He is much more regular than the domestic cat that knows the dinner hour.

It is an interesting sight to see my pundit seated majestically on the street pial and begin his lectures to the crowds that assemble after their supper. The book is laid on a wooden stand before him, that he may follow the text whenever necessary. He dilates on the original, with a wealth of arresting detail. Generally, my pundit

chooses another who can sing the verses tunefully for him. Occasionally he mixes his deep voice with that of the singer and floods the atmosphere with a rich clamour. As the sound ceases he speaks so rapidly that the audience listens and feels that he must be uncommonly learned. Though the flow is fast, the stream is turbid. He can capture the popular imagination by wise saws and modern instances. His culture is limited, but his confidence unbounded. He challenges any one to equal him in his easy delivery of words. He is an equally fast speaker in the classic tongue also, though the discerning critic distinctly traces passages in some of the speeches to earlier harangues.

The striking feature of my pundit is his business capacity. Neither slow nor lethargic, he is ever propelled by sufficient steam-power. He desires the acquisition of the highest title that a man versed in the *Sastras* can secure, from a commercial motive of pure advertisement. He believes in the magic of those long, high-sounding prefixes to his name. He is very hopeful of succeeding in his labours for winning such honours. He has gauged the value of an extra dose of unmerited eulogy of men in power. He bides his opportunity to take his kith and kin by surprise.

He does not repose much faith in the efficacy of fasting. He has a good appetite and likes variety and plenty in the choice of dishes. His preference for heavy feasts to a homely diet does him no harm. Healthier for all his frequent dinners at others' expense, his heart rarely acknowledges them save when accompanied by a parting silver coin from the host.

Ever watchful of his own interests he does not hesitate, once the rich man's gaze has fallen full on him. He rises to the occasion by doing everything in his power to earn unfailing patronage. Man or woman feels his words irresistible as he satisfies all equally well. He surveys any situation within the wink of an eye and adjusts himself to the demands of opulence or individual obsession, without impairing in the least his own safety. As an uninvited guest at a dinner party my pundit found all the seats occupied except one, which was left vacant for the host. Realising his plight, he skilfully managed to give no linkling of it to the other assembled guests, by squatting right on the vacant place and exclaiming to the host, "Oh, I am so sorry for being late and keeping you waiting; I have just now liberated myself

from the entreaties of another friend in order to keep my promise to you." He knows the world too well to mistake the host's real feelings in the matter.

It is his misfortune that he cannot understand much of English in spite of his frantic efforts to cope with modern needs. But that does not necessarily handicap him. With his assiduity in perusing the Tamil daily from cover to cover, he can speak with certainty on all topics, ranging from the high politics of the Round Table Conference at London to the latest star on the popular stage. He is so proud of his own achievements that he little avoids self-adulation. He is ready to utilise any chance he may get to expose the want of adaptability characterising the world of pundits.

Perhaps it is his innate hardness of feelings or a feigning on his part to enlist the support of the callous rich, that induces him to sneer at the poor and the wretched. He loves to enjoy the caresses of prosperity, especially at others' cost. The impulse to give is alien to his nature, and he cannot dispassionately view generosity in others. Having neither lethargy nor lingering affections,

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my pundit is swift in abandoning those whom fortune has forsaken. Not being home-sick, he wanders about from place to place where wealth is in evidence. Like a ravenous eagle, he catches from a distance the chances of success and swoops down upon his prey with all the speed and sureness at his command.

Music has indeed occasional allurements for him. But it only occupies a secondary place in his affections. Though he attempts to sing now and then, he feels he is not on sure ground. Yet he is positive that with a little amount of training he can excel the best singer.

In an age of all-round decadence of our best traditions, my pundit has also lost his place in the fine fabric of our ancient polity. But for the stray instances where he is still honoured, he has become a by-word for convention-ridden narrowness. He is himself like a lost twig, willing to be borne along the currents of the day. He is no longer sanguine that the diadems of kings will roll in the dust before learned poverty in the land. Power and place have a different significance for him with the change in our national outlook. His only hope

PERSONS AND PERSONALITIES

is to keep from starvation, both intellectual and moral, despite the many failings and follies attendant on his keen struggle for existence. Let him rise again with the courage of his vision and the conviction of his religion.

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